



To my dear friend  
in U.S.A.  
together with my  
best friend in U.S.A.

W. C. C. = 1.  
Hollywood 12-19 11



## The Mind of the Enlightenment

The eighteenth century doctrine of the state and society only rarely accepted without reservations the content of Hobbes's teaching, but the form in which Hobbes embodied this content exerted a powerful and lasting influence. Eighteenth century political thought is based on that theory of the contract whose



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underlying assumptions are derived from ancient and medieval thought, but it develops and transforms these assumptions in a manner characteristic of the influence exerted by the modern scientific view of the world. In this field too the analytic and synthetic method is henceforth victorious. Sociology is modeled on physics and analytical psychology. Its method, states Condillac in his *Treatise on Systems*, consists in teaching us to recognize in society an "artificial body" composed of parts exerting a reciprocal influence on one another. This body as a whole must be so shaped that no individual class of citizens by their special prerogatives shall disturb the equilibrium and harmony of the whole, that on the contrary all special interests shall contribute and be subordinated to the welfare of the whole.<sup>5</sup> This formulation in a certain sense transforms the problem of sociology and politics into a problem in statics. Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws* looks upon this same transformation as its highest task. The aim of Montesquieu's work is not simply to describe the forms and types of state constitutions—despotism, constitutional monarchy, and the republican constitution—and to present them empirically, it is also to construct them from the forces of which they are composed. Knowledge of these forces is necessary if they are to be put to their proper use, if we are to show how they can be employed in the making of a state constitution which realizes the demand of the greatest possible freedom. Such freedom, as Montesquieu tries to show, is possible only when every individual force is limited and restrained by a counterforce. Montesquieu's famous doctrine of the "division of powers" is nothing but the consistent development and the concrete application of this basic principle. It seeks to transform that unstable equilibrium which exists in, and is characteristic of, imperfect forms of the state into a static equilibrium; it attempts further to show what ties must exist between individual forces in order that none shall gain the ascendancy over any other, but that all, by counterbalancing one another, shall permit the widest possible margin for freedom. The ideal which Montesquieu portrays in his theory of the state is thus the ideal of a "mixed government," in which, as a

<sup>5</sup> Condillac, *Traité des systèmes*, part II, ch. xv.



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safeguard against a relapse into despotism, the form of the mixture is so wisely and cautiously selected that the exertion of a force in one direction immediately releases a counterforce, and hence automatically restores the desired equilibrium. By this approach Montesquieu believes he can fit the great variety and diversity of the existing forms of the state into one sound intellectual structure within which they can be controlled. Such a basic arrangement and foundation is Montesquieu's primary aim. "I have established principles," he points out in the preface to the *Spirit of the Laws*, "and I have observed how individual cases, as if by themselves, yielded to these principles, and I have seen that the histories of all nations are but sequences, and that each individual law is connected with another law or depends on a more general law."

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The method of reason is thus exactly the same in this branch of knowledge as it is in natural science and psychology. It consists in starting with solid facts based on observation, but not in remaining within the bounds of bare facts.



## THE TEACHER AND GUIDE

The trouble is that bare facts do not exist in a state of nature, for they are never really quite bare: the white trace of a wrist watch, a curled piece of sticking plaster on a bruised heel, these cannot be discarded by the most ardent nudist. A mere string of figures will disclose the identity of the stringer as neatly as tame ciphers yielded their treasure to Poe. The crudest *curriculum vitae* crows and flaps its wings in a style peculiar to the undersigner. I doubt whether you can even give your telephone number without giving something of yourself. But Gogol in spite of all the things he said about wishing to know mankind because he loved mankind, was really not much interested in the personality of the giver. He wanted his facts absolutely bare—and at the same time he demanded not mere strings of figures but a complete set of minute observations. When some of his more indulgent friends yielded reluctantly to his requests and then warmed up to the business and sent him accounts of provincial and rural affairs—they would get from him a howl of disappointment and dismay instead of thanks; for his correspondents were not Gogols. They had been ordered by him to describe things—just describe them. They did so with a vengeance. Gogol was balked of his material because his friends were not writers whereas he could not address himself to those friends of his who were writers,



because then the facts supplied would be anything but bare. The whole business is indeed one of the best illustrations of the utter stupidity of such terms as "bare facts" and "realism." Gogol—a "realist"! There are text books that say so. And very possibly Gogol himself in his pathetic and futile efforts to get the bits that would form the mosaic of his book from his readers themselves, surmised that he was acting in a thoroughly rational way. It is so simple, he kept on peevishly repeating to various ladies and gentlemen, just sit down for an hour every day and jot down all you see and hear. He might as well have told them to mail him the moon—no matter in what quarter. And never mind if a star or two and a streak of mist get mixed up with it in your hastily tied blue paper parcel. And if a horn gets broken, I will replace it.

His biographers have been rather puzzled by the irritation he showed at not getting what he wanted. They were puzzled by the singular fact that a writer of genius was surprised at other people not being able to write as well as he did. In reality what made Gogol so cross was that the subtle method he had devised of getting material, which he could no longer create himself, did not work. The growing conscience of his impotence became a kind of disease which he concealed from himself and from others. He welcomed interruptions and obstacles ("obstacles are our wings" as he put it) because they could be held responsible for the delay. The whole philosophy of his later years with such basic notions as "the darker your heavens the more radiant tomorrow's blessing will be" was prompted by the constant feeling that this morrow would never come.



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I'm sometimes frightened when I watch his films. Frightened because of some absolute perfection in what he does. This man seems to know not only the magic of all technical means, but also all the most secret strands of human thought, images, ideas, feelings. Such was probably the effect of Saint Francis of Assisi's sermons. Fra Angelico's paintings bewitch in this way. He creates somewhere in the realm of the very purest and most primal depths. There, where we all are children of nature. He creates on the conceptual level of man not yet shackled by logic, reason, or experience. That's how butterflies fly. That's how flowers grow. That's how brooks marvel at their own course. That's how Andersen and Alice charm in Wonderland. That's how Hoffmann wrote in lighter moments. The same current of interflowing images. The archivist Lindhorst,<sup>3</sup> who is also King of the Elves, etc. One of Disney's most amazing films is his *Merbabies*.<sup>4</sup> What purity and clarity of soul is needed to make such a thing! To what depths of untouched nature is it necessary to dive with bubbles and bubblelike children in order to reach such absolute freedom from all categories, all conventions. In order to be like children.

The very last line written by Gogol's hand was: 'For only as a child may you enter the Holy Kingdom.'

Chaplin, too, is infantile. But his is a constant, agonized and somewhere at its core, an always tragic lament over the lost golden age of childhood. The epos of Chaplin is the 'Paradise Lost' of today. The epos of Disney is 'Paradise Regained'. Precisely Paradise. Unreachable on Earth. Created only by a drawing. It's not the absurdity of childish conceptions of an eccentric clashing with adult reality. The humour of the incompatibility of one with the other. And the sadness over man's forever lost childhood, and mankind's



### 3 / EISENSTEIN ON DISNEY

Golden Age, lost irrevocably to those who want to bring it back from the past, instead of creating it in a better Socialist future. Disney (and it's not accidental that his films are drawn) is a complete return to a world of complete freedom (not accidentally fictitious), freed from the necessity of another primal extinction.

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